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ABSTRACT

A study investigated reading performance in one dimension of the language experience approach--the dictation of a story to accompany a wordless picture book. A miscue analysis procedure was used to describe the strategies and miscues evidenced by eight first grade beginning readers while reading a basal text story and while reading a dictated story. The oral readings of both texts were taped and coded using the Evaluation Form of the Reading Miscue Inventory developed by Y. Goodman and C. Burke. These data were assessed to determine strategy utilization of the readers on each text. In addition, both the structure of the texts and the reader's perception of reading were investigated in order to better explain strategy utilization. The results showed that language experience activities, specifically dictated stories, can enable children to process print more proficiently. The measures of readers' preceptions of reading showed that all of the children in the study held a similar theoretical model--somewhere between a phonics model and a skills model--of reading. Measures of text structure indicated that on both a word level and a syntactic level the stories produced by the students were more complex than the text story; on a semantic level, the dictated stories were generally better formed than were the text stories. (FL)

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The Effect of Reader-Authored Materials on
the Performance of Beginning Readers

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Although the language experience approach is often recommended for beginning reading instruction (Lee and Allen, 1960; Ashton-Warner, 1963; Stauffer, 1970; C. Chomsky, 1971; Clay, 1975; and McKenzie, 1978), to date, research documentation has centered on general achievement, readiness, oral language, vocabulary, word analysis, creative writing, spelling, and comprehension measures. Little research in the language experience approach has investigated the reading process. In her comprehensive survey of the literature, Hall reported that no study was located that investigated reading performance in conjunction with the language experience approach and suggested:

Future language experience research also could explore dimensions of the reading process. Investigations of children's oral reading performance, using miscue analysis procedures, could be conducted with language experience materials.

(Hall, 1977, p. 40)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate reading performance in one dimension of the language experience approach--the dictation of a story to accompany a wordless picture book. A miscue analysis procedure (Y. Goodman & Burke, 1972), was used to describe the strategies and miscues evidenced by eight first grade students (beginning readers) while reading a basal text story and while reading a dictated story. The oral readings of both texts were taped and coded using the Evaluation Form of the Reading Miscue Inventory by Y. Goodman & Burke, (1976). The data collected was assessed to determine strategy utilization of the readers on the two texts. In addition, both the structure of the texts

and the reader's perception of reading were investigated in order to better explain strategy utilization.

A Socio-Psycholinguistic Model of Reading

The model of reading used in this study is taken from Rhodes (1979) as adapted from Harste (in press), and is composed of three parts: The Print Setting, which is the text structure based on the author's theoretical model of reading instruction; The Mental Setting, which is the reader's perception of reading based on his/her theoretical orientation; and Strategy Selection (Figure 1). The main focus of this study is strategy selection, which is described in terms of the reader's more or less proficient use of the three cue systems of language as measured by the Evaluation Form of the Reading Miscue Inventory (Y. Goodman & Burke, 1976); however, the structure of the texts (Print Setting) and the reader's perception of reading (Mental Setting) are also important to this study as they represent a means of explaining strategy selection.

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

The model of reading presented here is termed "socio" as well as psycholinguistic in order to include both situational and linguistic constraints found in print settings. While the term "socio" could be construed to include a wide range of factors that may have some bearing on reading performance (level of income, number of books in the home, educational level of parents, and so on) in this study, "socio" refers to the constraints of the particular context in which the reading is taking place. For example, the type of reading instruction offered in a particular classroom results in both linguistic and situational constraints:

During reading instruction emphasizing a phonetic approach to reading, both the material and the setting may signal readers to access graphophonemic information. Students, in this setting, demonstrate the characteristic behaviors of decoders by producing many highly graphophonemically similar nonsense words (Barr, 1975; Harste & Burke, 1977). On a shopping trip these same children may process print more naturally because other schemata are signaled and accessed in this context.

(Harste & Burke, 1978, p. 13)

In this example, the material, a linguistic constraint, and the setting, a situational constraint, modify both the reader's perception of reading and the way that reader samples print. Further, the process is a cyclical one in that each encounter with print serves to further modify the reader's perception of reading and the reader's sampling of print for the next text encountered (Harste & Carey, 1979, p. 4). The cyclic nature of this model is important to the present study because, although the focus is on strategy selection across two different types of texts, a description of the particular strategies utilized by the reader does not explain why those strategies were utilized. Knowledge of the structure of the texts and the reader's perception of reading is essential to fully understand the differences in strategy selection across the two texts.

Expected Outcomes

As measured by a miscue analysis procedure, beginning readers will exhibit more proficient use of the cue systems of language while reading their dictated story than while reading the basal text story as determined by both sentence level measures and the word level measures.

Measures of Strategy Selection

More sentences, as finally produced by the reader, will be judged both syntactically and semantically acceptable on the dictated story than on the text story. Sentences, as finally produced by the reader, will less often result in a meaning change for the dictated story than for the text story.

Readers will produce fewer miscues per hundred words (MPHW) on the dictated story than on the text story. Of the miscues produced, readers will more often correct those miscues on the dictated story than on the text story. Miscues produced on the dictated story will more often be of the same grammatical function than those produced on the text story.

Measures of Reader's Perception of Reading

The reader's perception of reading will help to explain performance (strategy selection) on the two types of texts. Perception of reading was measured by prior instruction, theoretical model (both students and teacher) as elicited by The Reading Interview (Burke, 1978), and verbalizations made during the reading process.

Measures of Text Structure

The structure of the text will also help to explain the reader's performance (strategy selection) on the two types of texts. The structure of the text was determined by a readability measure (Spache, 1953), an untaught words measure, a syntactic measure (Hunt, 1966), and a semantic measure (Stein & Glenn, 1977). Further, the reader's comprehension of the text was measured using a retelling procedure (Y. Goodman & Burke, 1972).

Overview of Analyses of Data

The texts, "Red is Nice" (Houghton Mifflin, 1971) and The Bear and the Fly (Winter, 1976), were selected on the basis of predictability. The recurring nature of the episodes in both texts was used to judge them as semantically predictable. In the case of the basal text story, recurring patterns in the text also contributed to predictability on the syntactic level. The wordless picture book was chosen from a dozen or more such books used in previous studies as the one that elicited the most well-formed stories.

The sample in this study was composed of eight first grade students from a racially integrated, suburban school in a mid-sized, midwestern city. Inclusion in the sample was dependent on student performance on the text story, "Red is Nice." In order to be designated a "beginning reader" students had to make enough miscues (minimum of 20) to provide data for the study, but not so many miscues as to render the text meaningless.

Analyses to be performed were selected on the basis of the theoretical model. Since reading is viewed here as a cyclical process in which both the reader's perception of reading and the structure of the text have some influence on the strategies selected by the reader for any particular text, all three areas (strategy selection, reader's perception, and text structure) were deemed important to the investigation and coding procedures were selected or developed for each.

Summary of Measures of Strategy Selection

Procedures developed by Y. Goodman and Burke for both the Reading Miscue Inventory (1972) and the Evaluation form of the Reading Miscue

Inventory (1976) were selected to measure strategy selection. The expected outcomes for measures of strategy selection were divided into three categories: sentence level measures; miscues per hundred words and correction strategies; and word level measures. On a sentence level, more students produced syntactically and semantically acceptable sentences that closely approximated the author's intended meaning on the dictated story than on the text story. In addition, more students made fewer miscues per hundred words and more often corrected those miscues on the dictated story than on the text story. And, finally, more students produced miscues with less graphic and sound similarity and more grammatical function similarity on the dictated story than on the text story. When individual scores were averaged in order to compare group performance on the two stories (Table 1), the results showed that, on all measures, the students (as a group) were able to make more proficient use of predicting, confirming, and comprehending strategies on the dictated story than on the text story.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

In addition to the information available from the Evaluation Form of the RMI (Y. Goodman & Burke, 1976), omissions and substitutions were compared. On the dictated story, the five more proficient readers were able to maintain their strategy of producing more substitutions than omissions. Furthermore, two of the three less proficient readers were able to reduce their over reliance on omissions and also produced more substitutions than omissions. (Table 2)

(Insert Table 2 about here)

In conclusion, the dictated text did appear to exert an influence on the strategy selection of the readers. On every measure investigated, students exhibited more effective reading strategies while reading the dictated story than while reading the text story.

Summary of Measures of Reader's Perception

This category was measured by a description of prior instruction, stated perceptions of reading as measured by The Reading Interview (Burke, 1978), and verbalizations made while reading the selection. Prior instruction was measured by the number of days the students had received both phonics and basal instruction, and the number of basal stories read as opposed to opportunities to engage in language experience activities. Due to the kinds of texts selected and the instruction received, the students in this study exhibited primarily letter and word level strategies. The prevalence of these strategies was further documented by information from the interviews: The teacher stated that she taught reading through phonics and sight words; all eight children suggested sounding out as their first strategy, both for themselves and for helping others; and, finally, by far the largest percentage of verbalizations for both stories focused on the word level (Table 3). All three measures, then, indicate that the children in this study perceive reading as a decoding-to-sound process.

(Insert Table 3 about here)

Summary of Measures of Text Structure

A variety of methods for determining the structure of the text are available. In this study, the following were used: Readability (Spache, 1974), number of untaught, T-units (Hunt, 1966), and story grammar

(Stein & Glenn, 1977). In addition, the retellings given by the students were scored as a measure of their comprehension of the text.

Readability measures and counts of previously untaught words are similar in that they both focus on word level measures. The Spache formula also takes into consideration sentences, but only as a function of length, not syntactic complexity. The Spache formula (1974) was selected for this study because it claims to give the most accurate information for primary level materials (Spache, 1974, p. 198). On this measure, all of the children's dictated stories were found to be more difficult than the text story (Figure 2).

(Insert Figure 2 about here)

In order to obtain a word level measure more particular to the subjects in the study, the number of previously untaught words were counted for both the basal story and the dictated stories. At the time of testing, all students had completed levels A, B, and C of the Sullivan Readiness Reader (Behavioral Research Laboratories, 1969) and the two preprimers, Tigers and Lions (Houghton Mifflin, 1971). A list was compiled of all the words presented in these five books. Any word not on the list that occurred in the stories was considered "untaught." On this measure, too, the dictated stories were found to be more difficult than the text story (Figure 3).

(Insert Figure 3 about here)

Since the purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the text on readers' strategies, two other measurements were made at the word level--the number of unfamiliar and the number of untaught words correctly identified. For example, the text story, "Red is Nice," contained four unfamiliar words according to the Spache word list while

The Bear and the Fly stories dictated by the children contained from four to sixteen unfamiliar words. For each child, both the number of unfamiliar words and the number of these words correctly identified was calculated. On the untaught words measure, "Red is Nice" contained twenty-three untaught words while The Bear and the Fly dictated stories contained from thirty-one to eighty-three. The same calculations were made on this measure.

All the readers were able to process at least as many unfamiliar words on the dictated story as on the text story and seven readers were able to process even more--up to four times as many (Table 4).

(Insert Table 4 about here)

On the untaught words measure (Table 4), again all readers took the risk of including words in their stories that they had not been taught through prior instruction received in the classroom. In addition, all readers were able to correctly identify more untaught words on the dictated stories than on the text story. In fact, with the exception of Phil, all readers correctly identified at least twice as many untaught words on the dictated story as on the text story (Table 5).

(Insert Table 5 about here)

Because the readability measure and the untaught words measure were both at the word level, an attempt was also made to determine the difficulty of the two texts on a syntactic level. The most commonly used syntactic measure is the T-unit. A T-unit is defined as a "minimal terminable unit" and "consists of exactly one main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses happen to be attached or embedded within it" (Hunt, 1966, p. 737).

Although the relationships between words, clauses, T-units, and sentences can be measured in a variety of ways, Hunt's study (1965) suggested that the length of T-unit (words per T-unit) was the best measure of syntactic maturity; therefore, length of T-unit was used to measure the syntactic complexity of both the basal story and the dictated stories and revealed that all but one of the dictated stories were more syntactically complex than the text story (Figure 4).

(Insert Figure 4 about here)

Finally, an attempt was made to measure the semantic structure of both the text story and the dictated stories. Various approaches were tried (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Halliday & Hasan, 1976), but the story grammar approach developed by Stein and Glenn (1977) proved the most successful. In addition, of all the text analysis research available, Stein & Glenn have done the most work with early elementary children. Thus, their approach was deemed the most appropriate for this study. The dictated stories were found to be more well-formed in that they included setting statements and complete episodes. The text story had no setting statement (Table 6) and no complete episodes (Table 7).

(Insert Table 6 about here)

(Insert Table 7 about here)

One other striking aspect of this particular data was the correspondence between reading performance and production of stories. The data in Table 7 is listed in order of reader proficiency as determined by performance on the text story. That is, the first Bear and Fly story was produced by the most proficient reader in the study and the last Bear and Fly story was produced by the least proficient reader in the

study. Interestingly, the percent of complete-episodes-data follows exactly the same pattern. That is, the most proficient reader in the study produced the most complete story, the second most proficient reader produced the second most complete story, and so on.

Finally, the relationship between episodes was also investigated. Because the CAUSE relationship is the strongest, one would expect better recall of stories with more CAUSE relationships. However, retellings were also collected and, although the dictated story contained proportionately more CAUSE relationships, only one student produced a better retelling for the text story than the dictated story.

Conclusions

In summary, all of the strategy selection measures indicated that the students as a group, clearly performed better on the dictated stories than on the text story. In the investigation of the reader's perception of reading, the measures indicated that all of the children in this study held a similar theoretical model. On the continuum from phonics through skills to whole language, the students in this study fell somewhere between a phonics model and a skills model. The measures of text structure indicated that on both a word level and a syntactic level, the stories produced by the students were more complex than the text story. However, on a semantic level, the dictated stories were generally more well-formed than the text story. Finally, the retelling results suggested that the dictated stories were recalled better than the text story.

The results of this study did support the contention that language experience activities, in this case a story dictated to accompany a wordless picture book, can enable young readers to process print more

proficiently. Given the perception of reading held by the students in this study and the increased complexity of their dictated stories, performance on the dictated story was surprising. Because of an over reliance on sounding out or prior knowledge of words, these students should not have performed as well as they did when faced with a task that appeared to be more difficult. Thus, the increased proficiency on the dictated stories was not explained by either the reader's perception of reading or the word and syntactic level measures of the tests. Only the semantic level measure appeared to explain reader performance. Perhaps the completeness of episodes in the children's stories gave them the kind of semantic knowledge necessary to go beyond their usual letter and word level strategies and pay more attention to meaning.

Traditionally, the level of difficulty of a text has been measured on word and sentence levels. Uncommon words and syntactically complex sentences have been assumed to present the reader with a more difficult task. The results of this study do not support this idea. Rather, it seems that uncontrolled vocabulary and complicated syntax can be handled efficiently if students are allowed to produce their own texts.

The results of this study indicate that the text can influence strategy selection. However, traditional readability measures do not appear to predict more accessible texts as readily as semantic measures. Attempts to simplify texts based on word level and syntactic level measures appeared to strip away needed semantic support. Perhaps the over simplification of texts for beginning readers impedes rather than supports children's attempts to make sense of print.

As researchers expand their knowledge of language, the study of all language encounters becomes increasingly difficult. This investigation

centered on one instance of one type of language experience activity. Still, the attempt to document and explain that one activity revealed a maze of interrelationships. The descriptions of even a single reader's interaction with a single piece of print is not a simple task. As J. Harste has suggested, "Any instance of written language use . . . is best viewed as the orchestration of a complex social event" (Harste, 1980, p. 2).

Traditionally, reading educators, being cognizant of this fact, have interpreted it to mean that simplification of the process engenders accessibility. This study questions that interpretation. Conceptually and instructionally, the findings of this study mandate the development of more viable models of written language which recognize that written language, in its natural complexity, supports control.

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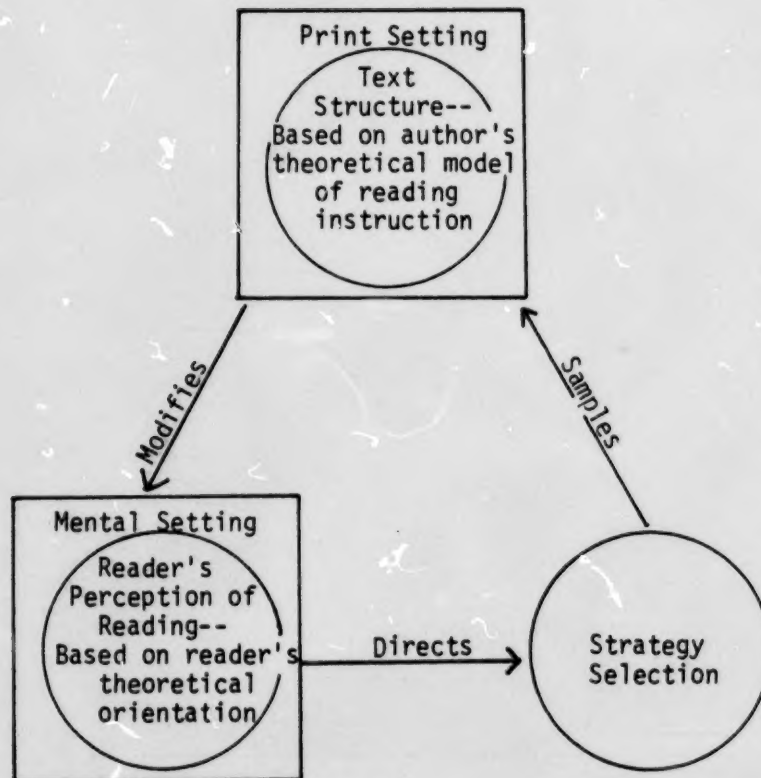


Figure 1 A reader encounters a text. (From Rhodes, 1979a as adapted from Harste, in press)

Table 1
Reading Miscue Inventory Results
Mean Percentage Scores

	Text Story	Dictated Story
Syntactic Acceptability	66.5%	76.0%
Semantic Acceptability	61.0%	72.1%
Meaning Change	53.7%(P+N) ^a	69.4%(P+N)
Miscues per Hundred Words	19.5%	17.3%
Correction	23.0%	33.3%
Graphic Similarity	83.9%(Y+P) ^b	71.0%(Y+P)
Sound Similarity	82.6%(Y+P)	67.1%(Y+P)
Grammatical Function	38.6%	49.5%

^aPartial meaning change (P) and no meaning change (N) were combined.

^bVery similar (Y) and partially similar (P) were combined.

Table 2
 Percentage of Omissions and Substitutions
 Individual Scores

	Text Story		Dictated Story	
	Omissions	Substitutions	Omissions	Substitutions
Phil	0.0%	80.9%	20.0%	80.0%
Tim	3.8%	65.3%	14.3%	85.7%
Jack	0.0%	73.5%	4.6%	83.7%
David	5.4%	83.8%	11.9%	86.4%
Karen	12.8%	76.6%	5.3%	81.6%
Cindy	59.7%	37.3%	43.7%	53.1%
Julian	60.0%	40.0%	68.7%	29.6%
Jeremy	61.2%	38.8%	41.0%	59.0%

^aPercentage of total number of miscues.

Table 3
Focus of Verbalizations

		Text Story		Dictated Story	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Meaning	[M]	5	12.2%	5	20.8%
Word	[W]	33	80.5%	15	62.5%
Situation	[S]	3	7.3%	4	16.7%

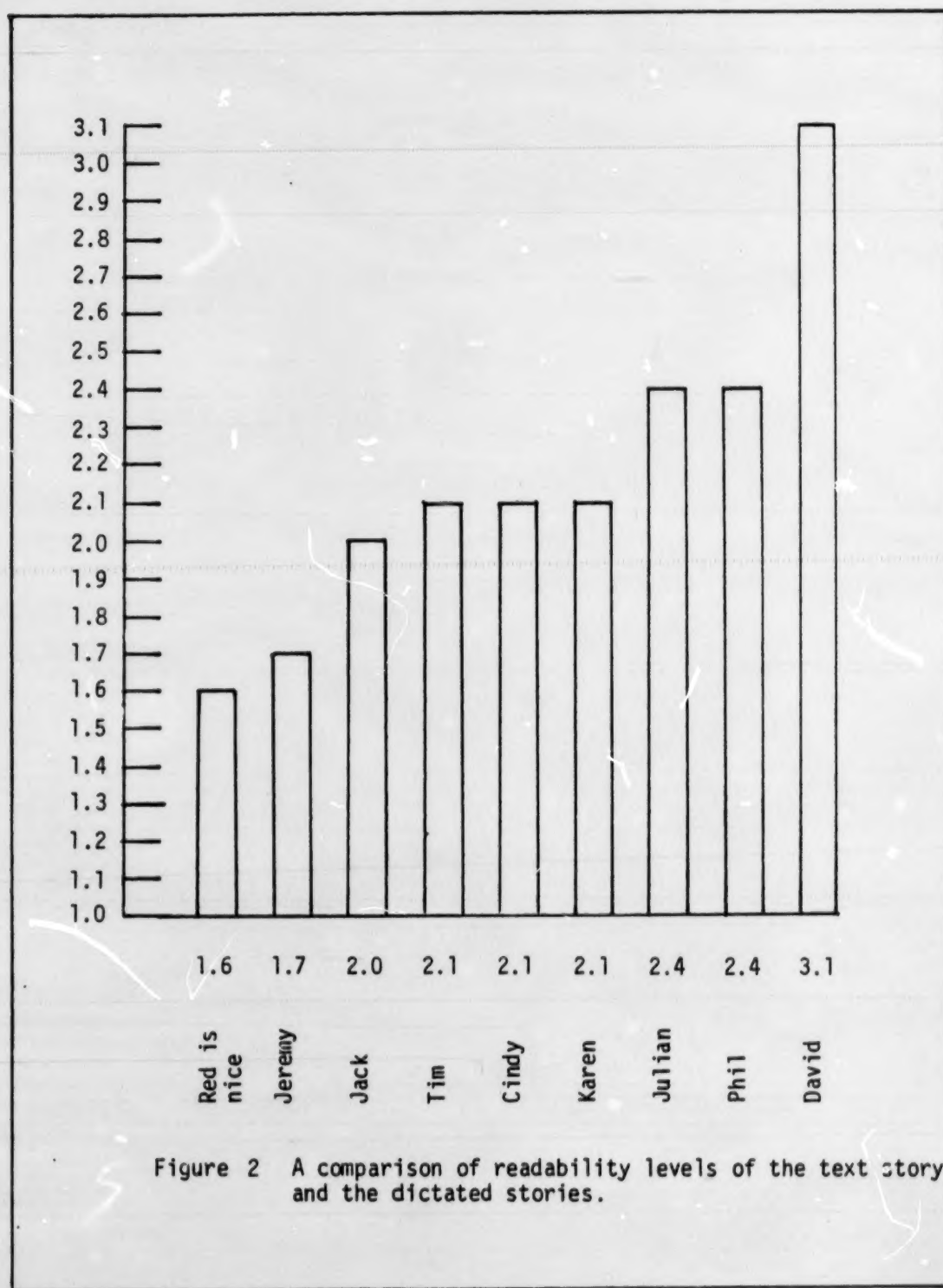


Figure 2 A comparison of readability levels of the text story and the dictated stories.

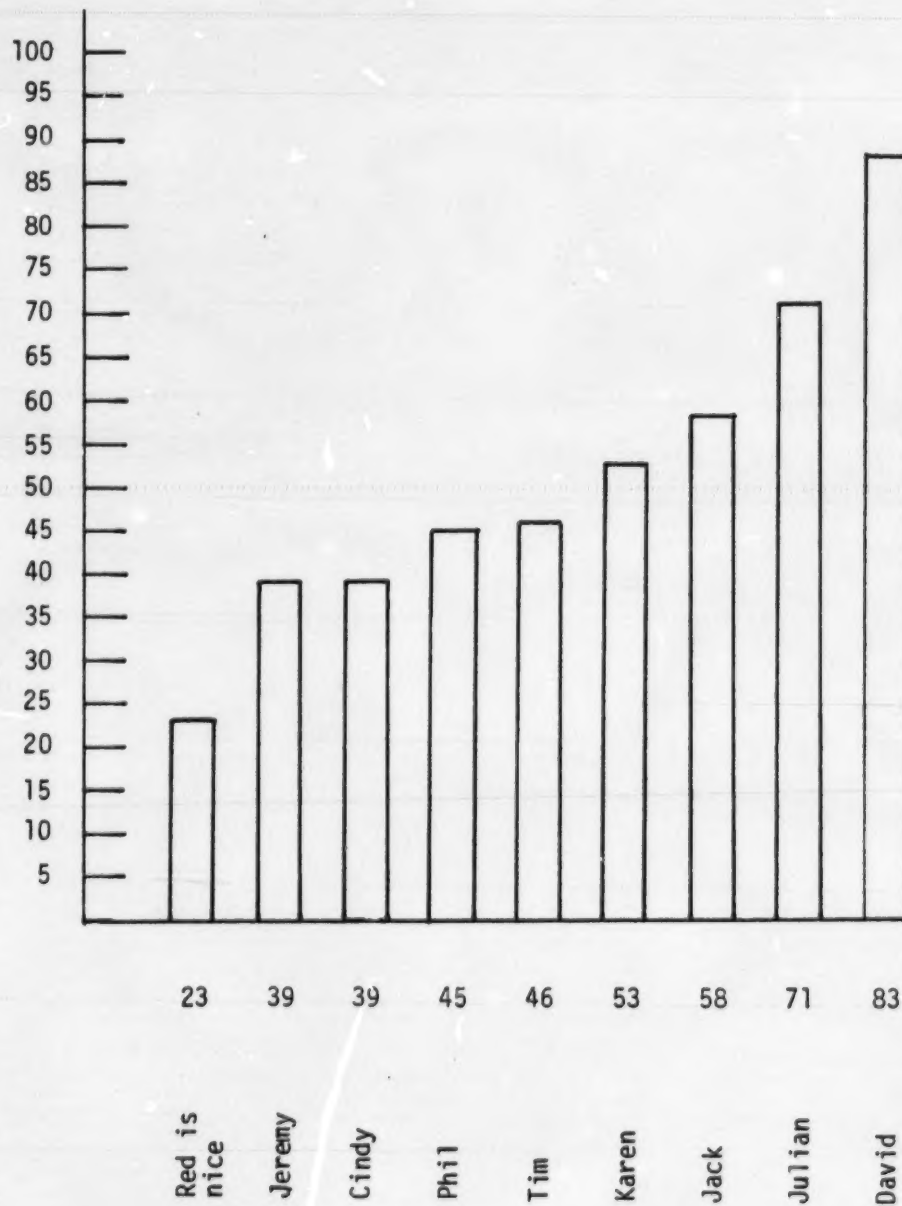


Figure 3 A comparison of the number of untaught words in the text story and the dictated stories.

Table 4
 Readability^a
 Unfamiliar Words Correctly Identified
 Individual Scores

	Unfamiliar Words	Number Correct	Increase
Phil			
text story	4	4	
dictated story	5	5	+1
Tim			
text story	4	3	
dictated story	7	6	+3
Jack			
text story	4	3	
dictated story	6	3	+0
David			
text story	4	3	
dictated story	16	9	+6
Karen			
text story	4	4	
dictated story	8	6	+2
Cindy			
text story	4	2	
dictated story	4	3	+1
Julian			
text story	4	3	
dictated story	7	4	+1
Jeremy			
text story	4	1	
dictated story	7	4	+3

^aSpache Readability Formula

Table 5
 Untaught Words Correctly Identified
 Individual Scores

	Untaught Words	Number Correct	Increase
Phil			
text story	23	23	
dictated story	45	45	+22
Tim			
text story	23	22	
dictated story	46	46	+24
Jack			
text story	23	20	
dictated story	58	43	+23
David			
text story	23	20	
dictated story	83	67	+47
Karen			
text story	23	17	
dictated story	53	43	+26
Cindy			
text story	23	12	
dictated story	39	27	+15
Julian			
text story	23	12	
dictated story	71	32	+20
Jeremy			
text story	23	7	
dictated story	39	23	+16

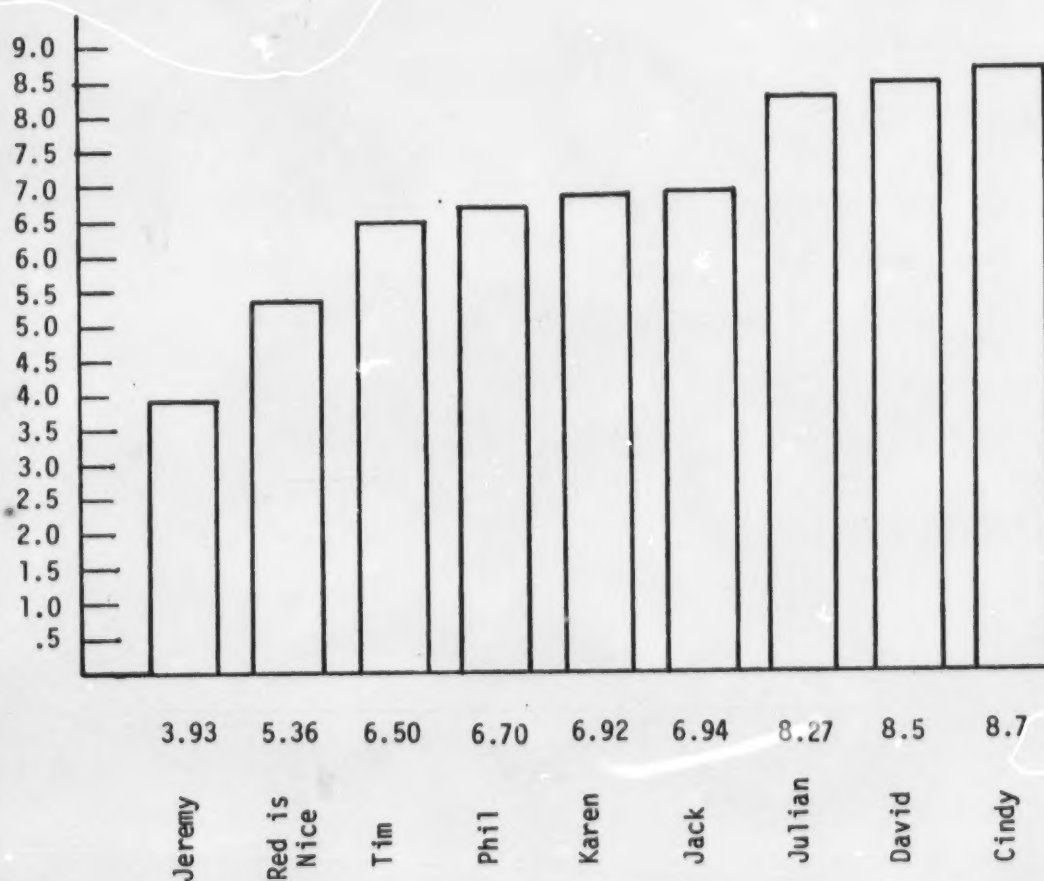


Figure 4 A comparison of words per T-unit in the text story and the dictated stories.

Table 6
Use of Setting Statements

R is N	-----
B & F	Once upon a time there was three bears and they were eating breakfast.
B & F	Once upon a time, they were eating dinner.
B & F	The mother and the father and the little girl were eating breakfast.
B & F	They're eating breakfast.
B & F	Once upon a time, there lived three bears.
B & F	The three bears were sitting at the table.
B & F	The three bears were eating breakfast.
B & F	The three bears were eating dinner.

Table 7
Percentage of Complete Episodes

	Number Complete	Number Incomplete	Total	Percentage Complete	Percentage Incomplete
^a R is N	0	6	6	0%	100%
^b B & F (1)	5	0	5	100%	0%
B & F (2)	4	1	5	80%	20%
^c B & F (3)	5	2	7	71%	29%
^a B & F (4)	4	2	6	67%	33%
B & F (5)	3	2	5	60%	40%
B & F (6)	3	2	5	60%	40%
B & F (7)	2	4	6	33%	67%
B & F (8)	2	4	6	33%	67%

^aNo episode included an attempt category. Goals were always stated as part of the internal plan.

^bOne episode did not include an attempt. The goal was stated as part of the internal plan.

^cOne episode did include an internal plan rather than an initiating event but no goal was included in the plan.